Security Council

Fifty-fifth year

Provisional

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Tuesday, 14 November 2000, 3.55 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. van Walsum	(Netherlands)
Members:	Argentina	Ms. Moglia
	Bangladesh	Mr. Amin
	Canada	Mr. Angell
	China	Mr. Chen Xu
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Jamaica	Miss Durrant
	Malaysia	Mr. Misran
	Mali	Mr. Toure
	Namibia	Mr. Uanivi
	Russian Federation	Mr. Gatilov
	Tunisia	Mr. Cherif
	Ukraine	Mr. Yel'chenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Harrison
	United States of America	Mr. Cunningham

Agenda

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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00-74620 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.55 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Austria and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Pfanzelter (Austria) and Mr. Mladenovic (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: In the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Guéhenno to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. I now give the floor to Mr. Guéhenno.

Mr. Guéhenno (*spoke in French*): With the Council's permission, I shall confine myself to reporting on the outcome of the most recent elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, because the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jacques Klein, may come to New York in December, at which time he will be able to meet with the Council himself.

On 11 November, the third general elections sin the signing of the Dayton Accord took place in Bos and Herzegovina under the supervision of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Euro (OSCE). Elections were held to the House Representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Federation House of Representatives, the Natio Assembly of the Republika Srpska and various oth bodies. Some 2.5 million voters were registered vote — 1,335,032 in the Federation and 1,102,913 the Republika Srpska. They voted at 3,600 polli stations across the entire territory of Bosnia a Herzegovina, monitored by 760 internatio supervisors and 5,500 local monitors. Fi certification of the elections results is not expect before 17 November, the deadline for the receipt postal ballots.

Turning to the activities of the United Natio Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH) duri the elections, the Mission helped monitor the detail security plans of the local police and oversaw th implementation during the elections. In general, t was done in an exemplary and professional manner. police officers from the International Police Task For (IPTF) received training on how to cooperate with t local police in this situation. Similar close cooperati was fostered — and took place — with the OSCE a with the Stabilization Force (SFOR). On election d IPTF officers made it clear to the local police th freedom of movement had to be ensured, that vot were not to be intimidated and that polling stations h to remain free of incidents that could disturb the pro conduct of the elections. As a result, the atmosphere the elections was relatively calm. That was a tribute the fine work of the IPTF and to the ability of the lo police to act professionally.

Voter turnout appears to have been somew higher than in the April municipal elections, when was 65 per cent. This time it has been estimated at per cent of registered voters. Turnout varied fr region to region within Bosnia. Estimated voter turn in the eastern Republika Srpska seems to have reach 80 per cent; that is expected to provide an additio boost for the Serb Democratic Party (SDS). Vo turnout is estimated to have been lower in the west Republika Srpska — about 50 per cent in Banja Lu Turnout among Bosnian Croats varied, although have indications that it was fairly high in the west p of Mostar and the Posavina canton, but lower in

Livno, West Herzegovina and Herzegovina-Neretva cantons.

A number of irregularities occurred. The main one, of course, was the Bosnian Croat "referendum", to which I shall return later. Apart from that, other irregularities appear to have taken place in Srebrenica, where some double voting was noted, coordinated by the local branch of the SDS, and possible intimidation of some voters by an SDS official, who had in fact been barred from public office. The OSCE will draw the double voting to the attention of the Elections Appeals Subcommission to seek corrective action. Other complaints and incidents of which we were informed were relatively minor.

(*spoke in English*)

I would now like to turn to the situation in the Federation, on the one hand, and in the Republika Srpska, on the other.

In the Federation, as I just mentioned, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) carried out the Bosnian Croat so-called referendum despite a warning from the OSCE Provisional Election Commission that it considers the expression of opinion to be a party activity subject to its rules and regulations. The HDZ failed to provide OSCE with a list of the locations for the referendum polling stations, of which there were 389, placed beyond 50 meters from election polling stations. The case has now been submitted to the Elections Appeal Sub-Commission for adjudication. Barring unforeseen developments, it is not expected that the holding of the so-called referendum will result in the invalidation of the elections.

The rhetoric of the President of the HDZ, Mr. Jelavic, has intensified. After the polls closed, he announced that HDZ was victorious, which, he claimed, signals the end of the missions of the OSCE, the Office of the High Representative and UNMIBH. He also added that the Bosnian Croats no longer recognized the administration of the international community because it wanted to transform Bosnia and Herzegovina "from a State of three equal nations into a State without the Croat people." Jelavic claimed that 70 per cent of Bosnian Croats voted overwhelmingly for the HDZ.

Though support for the Party of Democratic Action (SDA) is shrinking, preliminary results show that the party may not suffer the dramatic decline that some had expected. Gains by the Social Democratic Party (SDP) may not be as high as they were in the municipal elections, and the Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina (SBiH) may have experienced a strong boost in support. It appears likely that Silajdzic will play an important role as a coalition broker in many parts of the Federation — particularly in Sarajevo — and in the Federal institutions.

In the Republika Srpska, even though 80 per cent of voters stated prior to the elections that they were mostly concerned about economic issues, the Serb Democratic Party, which did not put forth an economic programme, stands to make great gains. This reflects the disillusionment of Republika Srpska voters with the performance of Prime Minister Dodik. Though the SDS is expected to have a strong showing in the Republika Srpska National Assembly, it is not expected to win an absolute majority. The Party of Democratic Progress (PDP) will again play a pivotal role. Its President, Mr. Ivanic, is a strong candidate to be the next Republika Srpska Prime Minister. Ivanic has openly precluded cooperation with Silajdzic's SBiH.

What conclusions should we draw from these results? Well, it had been hoped that this third set of general elections since Dayton would produce local political authorities who would work constructively to consolidate a sovereign and multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina. Regrettably, that has not yet been fully achieved. On the positive side, the multi-ethnic SDP polled well, but not as well as many in the international community had hoped. Smaller parties such as the PDP and the SBiH also gained ground and will certainly occupy a pivotal position as brokers and king-makers, although in neither case is their true political orientation clearly known. The Croat opposition parties — the New Croat Initiative (NHI) and the Croatian Peasants Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HSS) survived.

As a counterpart to that not-as-good-as-expected performance of the SDP, the traditional nationalist parties have done better than expected. In the Federation, the SDA remains a potent political force, which nonetheless will go through a period of internal reform that may see it adopt an even more conservative posture. The HDZ has managed to consolidate its supporters, and also the supporters of more right-wing parties, under a banner of fierce criticism and open defiance of the international community. The High Representative and the OSCE are currently considering

taking measures against President Jelavic in view of his defiance.

In the Republika Srpska, the SDS is indeed buoyant with its victory. It has run a campaign of not antagonizing the international community through nationalist rhetoric. It remains to be seen whether that approach will continue after the elections. Perhaps more significant is the closer alignment now between the likely Republika Srpska Government and the new Government in Yugoslavia.

The priority for the Office of the High Representative and the OSCE is now to convene the elected legislative bodies. This will enable the cantonal assemblies to elect the Federation House of Peoples, which will in turn elect members of the Bosnia and Herzegovina House of Peoples. The Republika Srpska National Assembly must also form a new Government and elect members of the Bosnia and Herzegovina House of Peoples. These processes are complex and will take time, though hopefully not the six months it took following the last general elections, in 1998.

The President: I thank Mr. Guéhenno for his detailed briefing.

Mr. Cunningham (United States of America): I want to thank Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno for his excellent briefing.

We welcome reports that this election was free and fair, apart from some disturbing incidents in Srebrenica and the illegal campaign activity by the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ).

We are encouraged by the early results in the Federation that show slow and steady progress for their moderate, multi-ethnic parties, which continue to improve their position at the expense of nationalist parties. It appears that the influence of the hard-line parties in the Federation has continued to decline, as we have seen in each successive election in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 1996.

Unfortunately, though, it appears that the results in the Republika Srpska are more disappointing, although that was not unexpected. The Serb Democratic Party (SDS), which has expressed its virulent opposition to the Dayton accords since 1995, appears to have won the presidency of the Republika Srpska. The situation in the Republika Srpska Assembly, however, is more mixed and important decisions remain to be made about governing coalitions. We will continue to urge that obstructionists be kept out of the Government.

We have reports of illegal campaign activity by the SDS in Srebrenica. This only reinforces our belief that the SDS continues to be controlled by those who are committed to seeing Dayton fail. We hope that over time the political situation in the Republika Srpska will change. It will take time for the Republika Srpska to recover from the scars of Milosevic's years of propaganda and mischief-making.

The dramatic political changes in the region over the past months bode well over the long term, but we will have to continue to work for further progress. In the meantime, as we try to take best advantage of the inexorable larger trends in the region, we cannot allow Dayton implementation to be blocked by obstructionists and undermined by corrupt elements working behind the scenes. It is critically important for the High Representative and the international community to be prepared to act forcefully to ensure that those who are opposed to Dayton are not in a position to block the full implementation of the peace accords.

Mr. Chen Xu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, we would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno for his very extensive briefing.

We welcome the successful holding of elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina and appreciate the large amount of work done by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the parties concerned, with joint efforts by the three sides in Bosnia. They were the third elections since the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreements, and they represent an important step in the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We hope that the elections will help the early realization of self-reliance and self-sustainability in Bosnia and Herzegovina, so as to enhance peace and stability in the Balkan region.

Only through tolerance and reconciliation among the Muslims, Croats and Serbs, and the restoration of confidence and joint development efforts, will good-neighbourly relations and peace be guaranteed for the Bosnian people. We sincerely hope that the leaders of the three groups will proceed on the basis of the fundamental interests of their people and safeguard the hard-won peace, leading to the achievement of economic independence and prosperity at an early date.

Mr. Gatilov (Russian Federation) *(spoke in Russian)*: We too are grateful to Mr. Guéhenno for his briefing on the results of the elections.

Russia, as one of the guarantors of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina, attaches great significance to further progress in the peace process in that country. We are convinced that the basic objective of the Bosnian settlement must be assistance in the establishment of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a united, fully fledged and viable democratic State, comprising two units which are on an equal footing.

We believe that an encouraging signal in terms of development of the situation in Bosnia has been seen in the most recent changes in Yugoslavia.

We share the concept of moving responsibility for advancing the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and for the situation in that country, to the Bosnian sides.

We believe that relying on "pushing through" Dayton, which often destroys the compromise variants achieved by the Bosnians themselves, is counter-productive. The way out, obviously, should be found through drawing up approaches acceptable, first and foremost, to the Bosnian sides and not by putting pressure on them. Such a policy cannot, as practice has demonstrated, lead to a real breakthrough in a Bosnian settlement.

International structures cannot, and must not, replace the legitimately elected organs of power in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in both entities. Basic efforts must be channelled towards focused work with Bosnian political forces, encouraging their cooperation between each other and with the international community. That approach seems particularly relevant after the general elections held on 11 November. We believe that their results will be of decisive significance for the fate of the peace settlement. We believe that a guarantee of success and the irreversibility of a Bosnian settlement is full and consistent implementation of the Peace Agreement.

The time has come, apparently, to ask the question: What is more important strategically — to ensure stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina or to push for progress towards its unitarization, despite the provisions of the Peace Agreement, which might lead to the loss of all those gains accumulated with such great difficulty over the last four years? We believe that there is no alternative. Of the many factors which determine the solid basis of Dayton, the most important is the balance of these two entities on an equal footing. We cannot allow a situation in which, because of ignoring the interest of one, the whole structure collapses. The most important thing now, in our view, is to ensure real stability in the country and in each of its entities. Today this is the most important basis for moving the peace process forward. We hope that it will also be promoted by the results of the recently concluded elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Harrison (United Kingdom): Since the representative of France will be speaking on behalf of the European Union, I will make just a few points.

My delegation welcomed the successful and peaceful conduct of the elections in Bosnia last Saturday. They were a testament to how far its people have come since the Dayton Accords were signed five years ago. The elections were efficiently organized and well run. Even the nationalist parties focused on jobs, the economy and corruption.

The official results will not be available for some time, but we expect all those elected to take forward the Dayton agenda, including refugee return, anti-corruption measures and economic reform. All the nationalist parties know what is expected of them. With Governments in Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia committed to the Dayton Accords, there has never been a better time for progress.

Miss Moglia (Argentina) *(spoke in Spanish)*: I should like to express my thanks to the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Guéhenno, for the very detailed information he has given us.

The fact that elections were held in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 11 November is, in our opinion, a valuable tool that can be used in strengthening democracy. We are pleased that the elections were carried out in an orderly manner, respecting secret balloting and without any violence. However, there were incidents during the electoral campaign, including speeches and declarations encouraging hatred, as well as a referendum having no legal basis whatsoever, clearly indicating that the Council and the international community as whole must follow very carefully developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina to ensure that the Dayton Accords are fully implemented.

Mr. Angell (Canada): I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno for his very thorough briefing.

We join other members of the Council in expressing our pleasure at the positive showing of the non-nationalist, multi-ethnic Social Democratic Party (SDP), which received the greatest support within the Federation. We are concerned, however, at the continuing strength of the nationalist parties of each community and at the effect that this continuing strength may have on the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

I have two questions for Mr. Guéhenno, and recognize that it may not yet be possible to answer either of them. First, we listened very carefully to Mr. Guéhenno's comments about Mr. Jelović and are wondering whether Mr. Guéhenno has a sense of whether the international community present in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, will respond in any way to the extreme views that were expressed by Mr. Jelović. Secondly, we would ask whether Mr. Guéhenno has any more detailed sense of the likely timing of the presidential elections.

Mr. Cherif (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): First, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on having organized this briefing on the general elections that were held on 11 November in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I would also like to thank Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his clear and useful statement on developments in the situation in that country.

The population of Bosnia and Herzegovina participated in the third general elections since the end of the war five years ago. These elections are all the more important because they are being conducted in a climate marked by important events throughout the region. The democratic developments in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which was recently admitted to the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as well as the encouraging events in Croatia, are factors promoting the development of peace and reconciliation in that country. We are confident that the establishment of close diplomatic relations between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will lay the foundation for good-neighbourly relations and for constructive cooperation that is mutually beneficial to the two peoples.

We welcome the good conditions in which the elections took place and the strong voter participation. Although we do not yet have the final results, we continue to hope that the moderate parties will make significant gains and that the final outcome will be in keeping with the expectations of the international community regarding the establishment of a multi-ethnic, tolerant and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is now up to the newly elected officials to redouble their efforts to improve the living conditions of the citizens and to channel their energies in order to curb unemployment and create good prospects for young people.

In conclusion, I am pleased to pay a tribute to the OSCE for its commendable efforts in supervising the elections, and to the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which continues to work for the full implementation of the Peace Agreements.

Mr. Uanivi (Namibia): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. I would also like to thank Mr. Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his useful briefing on the elections held on 11 November in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

When we look at what has been achieved in Bosnia and Herzegovina five years after the implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords with the assistance of the international community, we all agree that there is peace and progress in that country, however limited it may be. Indeed, our assessment is that overall progress has been very slow and that political will has been lacking in the leadership in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, the ground has been shifting, albeit slowly, in favour of those who wish to see a multi-ethnic, democratic Bosnia and Herzegovina. Therefore, my delegation urges the authorities in both entities to take their responsibility seriously and to cooperate fully with the institutions and representatives of the international community to make sure that their country does not revert to war.

The international community has spent a great deal of time and effort in Bosnia in order not to allow 62 per cent of young Bosnians to think that their future lies elsewhere in Europe, rather than in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We think that the assistance of the international community is vital in convincing those

young Bosnians that their future in Europe depends on their ability to bring a united, democratic and multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina to the European table. In this context, we are grateful to hear that the elections have proceeded smoothly, and we hope that all parties will respect the outcome.

Finally, we believe that the new political climate in the region will be able to provide wisdom and ultimately free those who have become hostage to their own narrow interests — those who believe that their interests will be protected by hatred and intolerance.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): Let me thank Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno for his detailed briefing on developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in particular on the conduct of the general elections held on 11 November. The smooth conduct of these elections and the fact that they proceeded without incident demonstrate the level of engagement of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and their commitment to the development of their country. We see these elections as a positive step forward for Bosnia and Herzegovina and for the further consolidation of democracy.

Every effort must now be made to focus on the building of the country and its institutions and on creating a society based on peaceful, multi-ethnic coexistence. Those in authority must bear this in mind in addition to the focus on the imperatives of economic reconstruction and on sustained economic and social development.

On 26 October, the High Representative, Mr. Wolfgang Petritsch, briefed the Council. At that time, my delegation mentioned a number of priority areas which we believe are of critical importance to the process under way in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The points which we stressed in that briefing remain relevant, particularly in the light of the recent general elections. Taken together with the recent positive political developments in the region, they augur well for the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We maintain that the following must be taken into consideration as the various administrations take up their duties: first, the full implementation of the New York Declaration; secondly, the return of refugees and further work on refugee-related matters, including documentation, employment, education, pensions and access to utilities; thirdly, judicial reform, which we see as critical for the creation of a democratic society; fourthly, the creation of a multi-ethnic society with multi-ethnic institutions; fifthly, the importance to the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina of the activities related to the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, which provides a broad regional framework for further progress, and in this regard, we emphasize the need for continued international support for institution-building in Bosnia and Herzegovina; and last but by no means least, the full involvement of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina in charting their own future.

My delegation hopes that the outcome of the recent general elections will serve as a springboard for the consolidation of the gains made over recent years in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and will ensure its functioning as an integrated and multi-ethnic State.

Mr. Misran (Malaysia): My delegation is grateful for the useful briefing by Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno on the partial results of the national elections that were held in Bosnia and Herzegovina last Saturday.

We have certainly followed the 11 November elections very closely and with deep interest. We commend the Bosnian people and the international community, in particular the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), for the successful conduct of the elections. That the elections were held in a relatively free and fair manner, with the exception of some irregularities mentioned by Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno, is a strong tribute to the international community and the Bosnians themselves. We look forward to the final and official outcome of the elections, which we believe will have a very significant impact on the peace implementation process in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We are hopeful that whoever is eventually elected by the Bosnian people in these elections will be committed to pursuing the peace process. We call upon the elected leaders to work together among themselves and with the international community to strengthen the political, economic and social foundations for national reintegration and reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is the paramount and pivotal responsibility that is expected of those leaders, under the clear provisions of the Peace Agreement, and by the international community, which is working hard to bring about its full implementation.

At this juncture, we should like to say that we share the serious concern about the illegal referendum

that was organized by the Croat nationalist party, the Croatian Democratic Union. That referendum is clearly illegal and represents a serious threat to the integrity of the Peace Agreement. It should therefore be rejected by the international community.

Mr. Toure (Mali) (*spoke in French*): Like previous speakers, I should first of all like to thank Mr. Guéhenno for his update on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. My delegation hails to and supports the commendable efforts of the High Representative to implement the Dayton Peace Accords. We call on the parties to abide strictly by the Accords. We welcome the holding, on 11 November, of the third general elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This development of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina bodes well for economic reform and national reconciliation. We should like to pay a well-deserved tribute to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe for organizing the elections and to the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Finally, the Council must follow the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina very closely so as to promote peaceful coexistence in that country.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine): We, too, are grateful to Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno for his presentation. Only a few weeks ago, the Council heard an open briefing on the general situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina by the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch. At that meeting, my delegation presented in full its assessment of the latest developments in Bosnia. In view of that, I will confine my comments to the few following points.

Ukraine welcomes the holding of general elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 11 November as a new and important event in the context of the further development of democratic freedoms, political pluralism and the building of common State institutions in the country. Although we should not overestimate the significance of these elections, it would be incorrect to underestimate the results, too. We praise the efforts of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe for assisting the people of Bosnia to hold these elections in a free and democratic manner. My country was pleased to learn that the elections were well organized and proceeded smoothly, with only a few minor incidents recorded.

My delegation would like to recognize the constructive role played by the local police under the supervision of the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina in securing the elections in both entities. At the same time, having heard the preliminary reports about the results of the elections, we feel only cautious optimism. Regrettably, the history of the years after Dayton testifies to the fact that nationalist parties in both entities have not always been known as the strongest proponents of the implementation of the Peace Agreement. We therefore share certain concerns that their victory in the elections could impede further efforts towards that end. At the same time, we believe that no one can overrule the will of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which should be respected.

In this regard, in our view it is important for the international community to send a clear message to the winners of the 11 November elections, indicating that their victory means, first and foremost, that they have the additional responsibility for making further progress in the pursuit of the Dayton process, in full cooperation with the international community. In this context, we have also taken note, with some concern, of the reports on the holding by the Croatian Democratic Union of a parallel referendum, which was treated as illegal by the OSCE, on greater autonomy for Bosnian Croats. In our view, such actions contradict the spirit of Dayton and might not only break up the Federation but also create an irreparable breach in the whole process of national reconciliation in the country. We are firmly convinced, therefore, that no excuses for attempts to revise the Dayton Agreement should be tolerated. The resolute stance of the High Representative and the OSCE on this matter has our full support.

My delegation also believes that the political leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina should again be called upon to redouble their efforts aimed at the full implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords as soon as possible, in order to change the culture of dependency on the international community to a culture of self-sustainability. Nonetheless, it is our sincere hope that if that message is heard, the results of the general elections held in Bosnia on 11 November will contribute to the further stabilization of Bosnia and Herzegovina and be conducive to the strengthening of the new political environment brought about in the whole region by the recent democratic changes in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

For its part, Ukraine stands ready to continue to contribute to the peace process in Bosnia through its participation in the activities of the Peace Implementation Council, the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Security Council.

Mr. Amin (Bangladesh): We are grateful to Under-Secretary-General Jean-Marie Guéhenno for updating us on the current situation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We appreciate the detailed information and analysis with which he provided us on the general elections. This morning, we had an opportunity to deliberate on this issue in plenary meeting in the General Assembly. Our main focus was on the economic development of the war-ravaged country. We believe that that is the key to the future of the country.

In a few days, we will be observing the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Dayton Peace Accord. It was that Accord that allowed the establishment of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign State. The new leadership is therefore expected to pursue the Dayton agenda, as our colleagues have said, with renewed commitment and vigour. The peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina have worked hard in recent years to restore their war-torn country to normalcy. Not all of their efforts have been rewarded with success, although some notable progress has been achieved.

Much of the slow pace at which the implementation of the Dayton Peace Accord has proceeded has been attributed to a lack of commitment by the local leadership — or, at least, by part of it — as well as to the surrounding political environment. This is now changing, or expected to change. We have reasons to be optimistic that the Dayton implementation process will now gather new momentum and proceed at a faster pace. Our optimism cannot but be guarded, however, as other speakers have pointed out, in view of the disposition of the nationalist forces.

With this backdrop in mind, we have several points to make. First, with regard to elections, we welcome the successful completion of general elections on 11 November in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Bosniacs, Serbs, Croats and other minorities deserve our praise for the peaceful conduct of the democratic process. We also appreciate the efforts made by the High Representative, as well as by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Mission, in the holding of these elections. From the preliminary information and assessment, it appears that political pluralism in Bosnia and Herzegovina is putting down roots. This is likely to usher in a new era in which, hopefully, the leaders will rise above their ethnically driven political agenda and be able to work for the well-being of the common citizen. It will now be the duty of all leaders representing their people at different levels to work hard for political stability and the economic development of the country.

Secondly, with regard to the political environment, new leaders have emerged this year in Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. This is likely to change the political dynamics of the region and facilitate a resolution of the long-standing issues of the return of refugees, detained and missing persons, war crimes and other related matters.

Thirdly, with regard to the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, there has recently been an increase in the return of refugees to their pre-war homes. The High Representative, in his briefing to the Security Council last month, mentioned the return of about 30,000 minorities this year. This relative increase in the rate of return is a positive development, and it should be sustained. The most important aspect of these returns is that they took place in or near the towns of Srebrenica and Foca, which are synonymous with mass killing and wild destruction. Much credit is owed to the tough measures taken by the High Representative for implementation of property laws, which have facilitated an increase in refugee returns.

Fourthly, on the issue of economic reform, we started by saying that we put emphasis on the economic reconstruction of the country. The new leadership must create conditions for self-sustained economic growth. The country must move beyond the legacies of the past era and make the transition to a dynamic civil society and a healthy, market-driven economy. The need for continued support by the partners of the peace implementation process is vital. This will set the stage for success, despite the many hurdles that might be erected by the obstructionist political forces.

Fifthly, attention should particularly be directed to capacity-building, including the modernization of the judiciary, strong and independent courts, the training of police and border service personnel, and support for key legislation projects.

The priorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina remain in the areas of economic reform, the return of displaced

persons and refugees and the building of common institutions — areas already identified by the High Representative as the three main priorities. Although progress has been slow, Bosnia and Herzegovina has come a long way towards attaining these goals. We applaud the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina for their continued efforts to rebuild a well-functioning sovereign State.

We are fully cognizant of the many obstacles standing in the way of progress. The need for the world to stand by the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina and provide the necessary support, assistance and encouragement is now greater than ever. We hope that Bosnia will soon be on a definite course towards economic and institutional recovery and that it will register achievements which will pave the way towards its ultimate integration into the rest of Europe.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus and Malta, as well as the European Free Trade Association country member of the European Economic Area — Norway — align themselves with this statement.

The briefing we have just heard from Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno reaffirms that the general elections that were held on 11 November in Bosnia and Herzegovina proceeded smoothly, without significant incident. This represents noticeable progress as compared to the 1996 and 1998 elections. These developments reflect a better acceptance by the voters of the rules of the democratic game.

In this respect, the High Representative, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH), by carrying out substantive action for several years now to promote democratization and respect for human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, have significantly contributed to this process. We should be gratified by this and congratulate them.

We would like also to thank the OSCE in particular for effectively organizing the voting. The OSCE's Election Appeals Subcommission is continuing its efforts to determine what took place in the polling stations in which localized problems have been identified.

Regarding the results, it is clear that at this stage we can speak only on the basis of partial and preliminary data. That data shows the dominance by the nationalist parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which we deem regrettable. On the territory of the Federation, it would seem that the multi-ethnic parties did not achieve the hoped for gains. In Republika Srpska, the Serb Democratic Party (SDS) will probably be the major victor in those elections.

Moreover, it should be recalled that the so-called referendum organized by Croat nationalists in certain sectors of Bosnia and Herzegovina was declared illegal by the OSCE. That referendum, which put forward the creation of new institutional structures based on ethnicity that would benefit only the members of one community, has no legal validity. Fortunately, the majority of the voters wisely rejected it.

As the Peace Implementation Council emphasized in Brussels last May 23 and 24, the promotion of joint operational and responsible democratic institutions is among the highest priorities of the international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Members of the Security Council had an opportunity to show their support for this objective on 26 October, in the presence of Mr. Wolfgang Petritsch.

In these conditions, it is essential that the elected authorities from both entities contribute, in a spirit of cooperation, to the formation of an effective central executive body. In a general manner, the Bosnian political officials bear responsibility for working to strengthen joint institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to promote good governance there in all of its aspects, and to fully implement the Dayton Agreements. This will be the key to reconciliation and economic development.

Continued efforts to change mindsets are also needed in order for voters to stop making decisions on the basis of ethnic criteria. Bosnian political officials have an essential role to play in this respect, as does the international community, in order to promote the long-awaited changes.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Austria. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Pfanzelter (Austria): I have the honour to speak in Austria's capacity as Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). My statement will be very brief.

Three days ago we witnessed peaceful and orderly elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The OSCE Mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina had meticulously prepared this election, which required well-coordinated efforts on the part of the international community. The OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Austrian Foreign Minister Benita Ferrero-Waldner, expressed her gratitude and appreciation to the United Nations Mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Office of the High Representative, the Stabilization Force, the European Community Monitoring Mission and other international agencies involved.

Although the OSCE retained overall responsibility for the elections, the local municipal election commissions and the more than 4,000 polling station committees carried out most of the work on the ground. In addition to more than 750 international supervisors and 200 international observers, the elections were monitored by nearly 5,500 domestic observers in polling stations throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. All in all, more than 40,000 Bosnian citizens assisted in the organization of these elections, and the local police successfully ensured that they were peaceful.

The local interest in and support for the election is documented by the satisfactory voter turnout and by the smooth voting procedure. Only minor incidents were reported. Nearly all polling stations opened and closed on time. The voter lists appeared to be generally correct. There are indications of certain problems in Srebrenica, the only municipality in which municipal elections were also held. In general, however, the observers agree that the voting procedure was a success with a majority of the population voting in a fair and free manner. It is now up to the authorities to ensure an efficient and orderly transfer of power and to guarantee that the public resources and funds of the country are protected during the transitional process.

This is not the place and time for the OSCE Chair-in-Office to comment on the results of the elections. The official results have yet to be released. Clearly, the international community hopes that the outcome of the elections will strengthen the Dayton Process. Let me reiterate in this respect that the OSCE will continue its efforts to strengthen civil society and support the economic reforms, the rule of law and the return of refugees in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Irrespective of the outcome, however, it is necessary to emphasize that the elections constitute a milestone in the realization of the concept of ownership in Bosnia and Herzegovina. On 11 November the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina demonstrated that they are prepared to shape their political destiny in a democratic, free and peaceful manner. It is up to the newly elected officials to prove that they are worthy of the trust placed in them.

The President: I invite the representative of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Mladenović (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno for his briefing on the elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Soon it will be five years since the signing of the Dayton/Paris Peace Agreement, the key document for the maintenance of peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It reflects a delicate balance of the interests of its three peoples and two entities. It is therefore of great importance for its successful implementation and for the preservation of peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina that all signatory parties and guarantors of the Dayton/Paris Agreement respect their obligations.

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is one of the signatories and guarantors of the Dayton/Paris Peace Agreement. Following the major democratic changes in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, conditions are being created to view the problems and outstanding issues related to the implementation of the Agreement in a new, democratic way.

The President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Vojislav Kostunica, and the new Federal Government pointed out on a number of occasions that they accept the Dayton/Paris Peace Agreement and that they would call for its successful implementation. This Agreement is the only realistic basis on which a sovereign and democratic State in Bosnia and Herzegovina can be built. I would like to stress that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has no territorial claims against its neighbours, including Bosnia and Herzegovina. One of our main foreign policy priorities is the normalization of relations with all former

Yugoslav republics. We are ready to conclude, as soon as possible, an agreement on the establishment of diplomatic relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina and to demonstrate our commitment to the pursuit of a foreign policy based on peace, good-neighbourliness and constructiveness. I would like to recall that Bosnia and Herzegovina was the first country President Vojislav Kostunica visited upon his election. On 12 October he conducted talks with the members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I wish to point out that the most important issue at this moment is to secure a consistent and full implementation of the Dayton/Paris Peace Agreement. Various requests or proposals aimed at changing or revising the Agreement are unacceptable for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It is therefore very important for the international community to unequivocally support the implementation of the Dayton/Paris Agreement.

The victory of democratic forces in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the strengthening of democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina will help strengthen our mutual relations. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will also work towards establishing special relations with Republika Srpska, which is in accordance with the Dayton/Paris Agreement. Naturally, as one of the constituent peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Serbs have every right to maintain close links with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. I assure you that those links will not be detrimental to the respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to the establishment of diplomatic relations.

We are pleased to note that the general elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina were held in a safe environment, without incidents, and that they could be called truly democratic, free and fair. All three constituent peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina have proved that they are ready to assume responsibility for democratic development, for their own future and for the commitment of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Europe.

We are convinced that normalization of relations among the countries of South-East Europe is a *conditio sine qua non* for peace, stability and development in the region and the shortest way for all its countries to take their rightful place in the European family of nations.

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia considers that one of the first priorities in the implementation of the Dayton/Paris Agreement is the return of refugees and displaced persons. I emphasize that in view of the fact that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is the country that provides shelter to the greatest number of refugees in Europe today. There are currently 286,600 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 337,000 from Croatia and 269,500 internally displaced persons in Yugoslavia receiving humanitarian aid. This humanitarian, economic and political problem can hardly be solved without support, cooperation and understanding by the international community. Therefore, all existing means and possibilities should be used, and new solutions should be sought, in order to alleviate this problem. Above all, this approach serves the interests of refugees and displaced persons and is aimed at strengthening stability in the region.

The question of the economic reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the success of the transition process is also very important for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in view of the complementary and interdependent nature of the economies of the two countries. We are convinced that significant breakthroughs will soon be made in this area as well. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is a strong advocate of an open market economy. Economic cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina is therefore very high on its agenda.

As I already stated, in a few days we are to mark the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Dayton/Paris Peace Agreement. The five years of peace have shown all the advantages of peace over war, conflict and division. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia calls, therefore, on all sides in Bosnia and Herzegovina to recommit themselves, with new enthusiasm, full openness and dialogue to an efficient implementation, primarily of the civilian part of the Dayton Agreement. As a signatory and guarantor of the Dayton/Paris Peace Agreement, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is prepared to render its full support to the democratic process in Bosnia and Herzegovina and, by the same token, to the stabilization of the region of South-East Europe as a whole.

The President: I shall now give the floor to Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno to respond to the comments and questions raised in the debate.

Mr. Guéhenno: There were two questions from the Canadian representative, one on President Jelović's remarks. It is, I think, the understanding of the international organization present in Bosnia and Herzegovina that those remarks should not go unanswered. At the moment there is discussion with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on what the appropriate answer is, and that has not been finalized yet.

On the second question, the timing of presidential elections, this is indeed a very political issue, and we do not have information at this stage as to when they could take place.

The President: I thank Mr. Guéhenno for the clarifications he has provided.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.